

DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

MFG. 1-72

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SUBJ: NETHERLANDS ANTILLES DESIRE FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH  
VENEZUELA ON CONTINENTAL SHELF

1. CARACAS PAPERS SEPTEMBER 27 HEADLINED REUTER-LATIN REPORT FROM THE HAGUE THAT NETHERLANDS ANTILLES IS ASKING DUTCH GOVERNMENT TO PUT PRESSURE ON GOV TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS ON CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARIES. PRESS ACCOUNTS NOTE THAT VENEZUELA, SIGNING 1958 GENEVA AGREEMENT ON MARITIME LIMITS, TOOK EXCEPTION TO MEDIAN LINE CONCEPT FOR CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARIES AND ADD THAT NETHERLANDS ANTILLES GOVERNMENT STATED VENEZUELA IS DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO POSTPONE DISCUSSIONS INDEFINITELY, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT OIL HAS BEEN DISCOVERED OFF SHORE BETWEEN VENEZUELA AND ARUBA. SENSATIONAL LA VERDAD, WHICH HABITUALLY CREATES HEADLINE CAMPAIGNS AROUND VENEZUELAN BORDER DISPUTES, HAS KICKED OFF A NEW ONE ON THEME OF "HOLLAND CLAIMS PART OF VENEZUELA."

2. COMMENT: AS ADDRESSEES ARE AWARE, VENEZUELAN NEGOTIATIONS WITH COLOMBIA OVER CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY IN GULF OF VENEZUELA ARE AT A VERY DELICATE STAGE, AND VENEZUELA HAS THUS FAR BEEN UNWILLING TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH EITHER NETHERLANDS ANTILLES OR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO UNTIL GULF OF

~~SECRET~~

(When Filled In)

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VENEZUELA DISPUTE IS RESOLVED. ALSO, VENEZUELAN ACCEPTANCE OF MEDIAN LINE CONCEPT WITH NETHERLANDS ANTILLES AND TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO COULD PREJUDICE GOV POSITION WITH COLOMBIA, FOR VENEZUELA HAS EXCLUDED MEDIAN LINE AS BASIS FOR NEGOTIATION OVER CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARIES IN GULF. IF, AS SEEMS VERY POSSIBLE, AGREEMENT IS NOT REACHED SOON WITH COLOMBIA AND FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ARE PUT OFF UNTIL AFTER 1974 COLOMBIAN ELECTIONS, IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT PRESSURES OF OIL NEEDS AND NATIONALISM WILL CONTINUE TO GROW WITH REGARD TO VENEZUELA'S DISPUTES OVER THE CONTINENTAL SHELF.

3. IN LATEST DEVELOPMENT VENEZUELAN FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS ALREADY REACTED SHARPLY TO NEWS REPORT. PRESS QUOTES ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER AS EXPRESSING SURPRISE AT PHRASE "PUT PRESSURE ON," SAYING THAT VENEZUELA WILL NOT ACCEPT SUCH PRESSURES AND ADDING THAT DUTCH AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN CALLED IN TO EXPLAIN.

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